

FOUR CORNERS AIR QUALITY TASK FORCE

What is the Task Force?

The Four Corners Air Quality Task Force is a multi-entity effort being formed to look at air quality issues in the Four Corners region. It will develop a broad list of options for improving air quality in the region. Membership will include community members, interest groups, local governments, industry, tribes, state and federal agencies. The Task Force will work over a two-year period, making its final report available by December 2007.

Air Quality in the Four Corners

The Clean Air Act contains a variety of air quality goals. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sets National Ambient Air Quality Standards for pollutants that are considered harmful to public health and the environment. The EPA and states are responsible for keeping clean areas clean under the Prevention of Significant Deterioration program. The states are currently working on plans to improve visibility (how far and how clearly you can see). Finally, we are concerned about the effects of air pollutants on the elements of the ecosystem—water, vegetation and soils.

Ozone, nitrates (formed from Nitrogen Dioxide and other pollutants) and particulate matter are of particular concern in the Four Corners region due to increased oil and gas operations, power plants, and general growth. This area has not exceeded the federal health standards for these pollutants, but we are working to ensure that these pollutant levels stay below the health standard and are protective of other values.

For instance, several pollutants combined together have caused impairment to visibility. The Environmental Protection Agency requires states to develop plans to improve the visibility in many National Parks and Wilderness areas, of which there are several in or close to the Four Corners region.

Some of the major sources causing air quality issues in our National Parks include:

- Combustion of Fossil Fuel for Heat or Power;
- Emissions from cars, trucks, motorcycles, and buses; and
- Dust from Unpaved Roads.

Another pollutant of concern in the Four Corners is mercury. Mercury is a naturally occurring metal that is released into the environment by natural and manmade activities, including coal-fired power plants, mining and steel production.

The Environmental Protection Agency passed the Clean Air Mercury Rule in 2005 to permanently limit and reduce mercury emissions from coal-fired power plants. We need to ensure this adequately addresses our particular regional concerns.

The creation of this Task Force will assist in protecting the air quality in the Four Corners region over the long term.

How to Get Involved

To become a member of this effort you can sign up to be either a task force member or an interested party. A task force member will need to attend quarterly meetings, and participate on one of the work groups. An interested party can attend meetings, will receive notices of the meetings and web site updates, and may submit comments via the web site. Sign up sheets will be available at the Task Force meetings or you can sign up on our web site.

For More Information on How to Get Involved

Please Contact:

Mark Jones, New Mexico Air Quality Bureau
(505) 327-6854

Or Visit Our Website at

<http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/aqb/4C>